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Information received from non-governmental organizations

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit the following statement submitted by the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

* E/C.19/2004/1.

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Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples

Statement submitted on behalf of the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network

1. The **Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network** (IWBN), an open network of Indigenous women interested in the area of environment, was initiated in 1998 at the 4th Conference of the Parties (COP IV) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in Bratislava, Slovakia. The IWBN was founded by the participating Indigenous women who felt it necessary to draw attention to their full and effective participation in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity within their communities, as well as their rights as knowledge holders. Since then the IWBN has held numerous meetings and it members have actively participated in the work of the CBD in such fora as the COPs, the Ad-Hoc Open-Ended Working Groups on Articles 8(j), the Ad-Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing of Genetic Resources and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In each of these fora, the IWBN has lobbied, networked and negotiated with the governments for the inclusion of Indigenous women within the official decisions and programmes of work of the CBD and for their greater participation within this process.

2. One of the most important CBD articles for Indigenous Peoples is Article 8(j). This article calls for the Parties to the CBD to respect, preserve and maintain Indigenous knowledge, practices and innovations, as well as promoting their wider use with the approval and involvement of Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, Article 8(j) encourages the equitable sharing of benefits when this occurs.

COP decisions V/16 and VI/10 on Article 8 (j) and related provisions state:

Recognizing the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and emphasizing that greater attention should be given to strengthening this role and the participation of women of indigenous and local communities in the programme of work,

and

Requests Parties, Governments, subsidiary bodies of the Convention, the Executive Secretary and relevant organizations, including indigenous and local communities, when implementing the programme of work contained in the annex to the present decision and other relevant activities under the Convention, to fully incorporate women and women's organizations in the activities;

3. The objectives of the Annex of the Programme of Work on the Implementation of Article 8 (j) and Related Provisions are:

to promote within the framework of the Convention a just implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions, at local, national, regional and international levels and to

ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities at all stages and levels of its implementation.

4. One of the general principles of the Programme of Work on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions includes the "Full and effective participation of women of indigenous and local communities in all activities of the programme of work". In addition, Task 4 of the first phase of that Programme of Work calls for the Parties to the CBD:

To develop, as appropriate, mechanisms for promoting the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities with specific provisions for the full, active and effective participation of women in all elements of the programme of work, taking into account the need to:

(a) Build on the basis of their knowledge;

(b) Strengthen their access to biological diversity;

(c) Strengthen their capacity on matters pertaining to the conservation, maintenance and protection of biological diversity;

(d) Promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge;

(e) Promote culturally appropriate and gender specific ways in which to document and preserve women's knowledge of biological diversity.

5. Most recently the IWBN met from 4-5 February on the island of Manukan in Sabah, Malaysia in order to collectively prepare and strategize for the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Out of this meeting came the "Manukan Declaration of the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network". We now submit to you the following key concerns and issues that came out of this meeting:

Indigenous women have a vital role in the conservation, transmission and sustainable use of biological diversity. It is critical that Indigenous women are active participants and decision-makers at every stage in developing and implementing the programmes of work and decisions of the CBD and that our knowledge of local ecosystems is recognized.

Our priority is to protect our inalienable and inherent rights over our knowledge and our biological and genetic resources. Any international regime on access and benefit sharing on genetic resources must include the right of Indigenous Peoples to free, prior informed consent as well as the right to deny access to our knowledge and refuse to participate in any access and benefit sharing arrangement.

There is a need for sui generis systems for protecting our knowledge because current intellectual property regimes are inadequate, inappropriate and do not take into consideration our customary laws.

The health and well-being of Indigenous women is intimately linked to the health of ecosystems and access to our traditional medicines. There is an urgent need to address issues of globalization, climate change, contaminants, such as the persistent organic

pollutants, and biopiracy which threaten our environments, health, well-being and livelihoods, and that of our children.

Indigenous women have not been sufficiently engaged in the identification and management of protected areas, which have often violated our rights, restricted our livelihood and access to natural and cultural resources and impoverished our Peoples. The CBD must fully incorporate the issues of equity, rights and prior informed consent.

Specific capacity-building activities for Indigenous women should be carried out such workshops on Indigenous women, traditional knowledge and the CBD.

6. Based on the above, we recommend that

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues should:

Seek the expertise of the IWBN in their work relating to their mandated area of environment;

Ensure that Indigenous women and their concerns are included within the policies related to Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations and other relevant bodies;

Examine the issues of globalization, climate change, contaminants, such as persistent organic pollutants, and biopiracy especially in relation to the health of Indigenous women and children;

Request the Parties to the CBD to ensure that Indigenous women are sufficiently engaged in the identification and management of protected areas;

Encourage the Parties to the CBD to be more inclusive of Indigenous women in all of their official decisions and programmes of work;

Support and facilitate a workshop on "Indigenous Women, Traditional Knowledge and the CBD".